

Lt. John Barker

British Officer, Light Infantry Company, 4th Regiment of Foot

“Last night between 10 & 11 all the Grenadiers and Light Infantry of the army making about 600 men under the command of Lt. Col. Smith of the 10th and Major Pitcairn of the Marines embarked and were landed upon the opposite shore on Cambridge Marsh; few but the Commanding Officers know what expedition we were going upon. After getting over the marsh where we were wet up to the knees, we were halted in a dirty road and stood there ‘till two o’clock in the morning waiting for provisions to be brought from the boats and to be divided, and which most of the men threw away, having carried some with ‘em. At 2 o’clock we began our march by wading through a very long ford up to our middles: after going a few miles we took 3 or 4 people who were going off to give intelligence; about 5 miles on this side of a town called Lexington which lay in our road, we heard there were some hundreds of people collected together intending to oppose us and stop our going on; at 5 o’clock we arrived there and saw a number of people, I believe 2 and 3 hundred, formed on a common in the middle of the town; we still continued advancing, keeping prepared against an attack tho’ without intending to attack them, but on our coming near them they fired on or two shots, upon which our men without any orders rushed in upon them, fired and put ‘em to flight; several of them were killed, we could not tell how many because they were got behind walls and into the woods; We had a man of the 10th Light Infantry wounded, nobody else hurt. We then formed upon the common but with some difficulty, the men were so wild they could hear no orders; we waited a considerable time there and at length proceeded on our way to Concord, which we then learnt was our destination, in order to destroy a magazine of stores collected there. We met no interruption ‘till within a mile or two of the town, where the Country People had occupied a hill which commanded the road; the light infantry were order’d away to the right and ascended the height in one line, upon which the Yankies quitted it without firing, which they did likewise for one or two more successively. They then crossed the river beyond the town and we marched into the town after taking possession of a hill with a Liberty Pole on it and a flag flying which was cut down; the Yankies had that hill but left it to us; we expected they would have made a stand there, but they did not chuse it. While the Grenadiers remained in the town destroying 3 pieces of Cannon, several gun carriages and about 100 barrels of flour, with harness and other things, the Light Companies were detached beyond the river to examine some houses for more stores; 1 of these Companies, was left at the Bridge, another on a hill some distance from it, and another on a hill $\frac{1}{4}$ of a mile from that; the other 3 went forward 2 or 3 miles to seek for some cannon which had been there but had been taken away that morning. During this time the People were gathering together in great numbers, and taking advantage of our scatter’d disposition, seemed as if they were going to cut off the communication with the Bridge, upon which the two Companies joined and went to the Bridge to support that Company; the three companies drew up in the road on the far side of the bridge and the Rebels on the hill above, covered by a wall; in that situation they remained a long time very near an hour, the three Companies expecting to be attacked by the Rebels who were about 1000 strong. Captain Lawrie who commanded these three Companies sent to Col. Smith begging he would send more troops to his assistance and informing him of his situation; the Col. Ordered 2 or 3 Companies but put himself at their head by which means stopt ‘em from being time

enough, for being a very fat heavy man he would not have reached the Bridge in half an hour tho' it was not half a mile to it; in the mean time the Rebels marched into the road and were coming down upon us when Capt. Lawrie made his men retire to this side of the Bridge, which by the by he ought to have done at the first and then he would have had time to make a good disposition, but at this time he had not, for the rebels were got so near him that his people were obliged to form the best way they could as soon as they were over the Bridge, the three companies got one behind the other so that only the front one could fire; the Rebels when they got near the Bridge halted and fronted filling the road from top to bottom. The fire soon began from a dropping shot on our side, when they and the front company fired almost at the same instant, there being nobody to support the front Company. The others not firing the whole were forced to quit the bridge and return to Concord...the whole then...drew up in the town and waited for the 3 Companies that were gone on, which arrived in about an hour. Four officer[s] of eight who were at the Bridge were wounded, three men killed; one sergeant and several men wounded; after getting as good conveniences for the wounded as we could, and having done the business we were sent upon, we set out upon our return..."